



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Alaska District

Public Notice of Application for Permit

Regulatory Branch (1145b)
Post Office Box 6898
Elmendorf AFB, Alaska 99506-6898

PUBLIC NOTICE DATE: 12 MARCH 2004

EXPIRATION DATE: 12 APRIL 2004

REFERENCE NUMBER: POA-2004-282-2

WATERWAY NUMBER: Norton Sound

Interested parties are hereby notified that an application has been received for a Department of the Army permit for certain work in waters of the United States as described below and shown on the attached plan.

APPLICANT: The applicant is Concha Holdings Ltd., 200 West 34th Avenue, #1183, Anchorage, Alaska 99503.

LOCATION: The project is located in Norton Sound, 1 to 2 miles offshore. Located in section 35 and 36, T. 11 S., R. 35 W., and sections 32, 33, 4, and 5, T. 11 S., R. 34 W., Kateel River Meridian. Within latitude 64° 29' N, and longitude 165° 29' W.

WORK: Float a suction dredge off the coast of Nome in Norton Sound. The 20-inch nozzle will be used to dredge the ocean bottom to recover gold and precious metals. The suction tube will be 24 inches in diameter. The applicant proposes to process 2,000 cubic yards of material an hour, twenty hours a day during the 150-day ice-free season. The suction dredge nozzle will be remotely operated with controllers, not manually under water. The dredge will be floating in Norton Sound like a boat in normal wave conditions. During storm events, it could be hydraulically jacked up above the waves. If a severe storm is expected, the dredge will go to deeper water. The operation would deposit processed tailings behind the dredge back into the sea. If the operation works smoothly with no glitches the mining could be completed in three complete mining seasons from 2004-2006. A total of 32,000,000 cubic yards of material would be dredged, processed, and returned to the sea by this operation. The tailings would be stacked with low profile swales and ridges upon the sea floor.

PURPOSE: Recover gold from the sea floor of Norton Sound.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: This is a new operation working unmined ground and some ground previously mined by the Bima dredge. There is 2,200 acres of sea floor under lease from the State of Alaska, ADL numbers 598747, 598749, and 598750 that the applicant proposes to mine. The applicant proposes to mine a total of 2,200 acres. The Corps proposes to issue the DA permit for 5 years. This would allow for mining problems, unforeseen contingencies, and weather delays. The agent for the project is Mr. Jim Halloran, (907) 250-3726.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: A permit for the described work will not be issued until a certification or waiver of certification as required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (Public Law 95-217), has been received from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT CERTIFICATION: Section 307(c)(3) of the Coastal Zone, Management Act of 1972, as amended by 16 U.S.C. 1456(c)(3), requires the applicant to certify that the described activity affecting land or water uses in the Coastal Zone complies with the Alaska Coastal Management Program. A permit will not be issued until the Office of Project Management and Permitting, Department of Natural Resources has concurred with the applicant's certification.

PUBLIC HEARING: Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, reasons for holding a public hearing.

CULTURAL RESOURCES: The latest published version of the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) has been consulted for the presence or absence of historic properties, including those listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. There are no listed or eligible properties in the vicinity of the worksite. Consultation of the AHRS constitutes the extent of cultural resource investigations by the District Engineer at this time, and he is otherwise unaware of the presence of such resources. This application is being coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Any comments SHPO may have concerning presently unknown archeological or historic data that may be lost or destroyed by work under the requested permit will be considered in our final assessment of the described work.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION: The Alaska District fully supports tribal self-governance and government-to-government relations between the Federal government and Federally recognized Tribes. This notice invites participation by agencies, Tribes, and members of the public in the Federal decision-making process. In addition, Tribes with protected rights or resources that could be significantly affected by a proposed Federal action (e.g., a permit decision) have the right to consult with the Alaska District on a government-to-government basis. Views of each Tribe regarding protected rights and resources will be accorded due consideration in this process. This Public Notice serves as notification to the Tribes within the area potentially affected by the proposed work and invites their participation in the Federal decision-making process regarding the protected Tribal right or resource. The affected Tribe upon written request to the District Engineer may initiate consultation during the public comment period.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: Preliminarily, the described activity will not affect threatened or endangered species, or their critical habitat designated as endangered or threatened, under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 844). This application is being coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. Any comments they may have concerning endangered or threatened wildlife or plants or their critical habitat will be considered in our final assessment of the described work.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT: The proposed work is being evaluated for possible effects to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) pursuant to the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1996 (MSFCMA), 16 U.S.C. *et seq* and associated federal regulations found at 50 CFR 600 Subpart K. The Alaska District includes areas of EFH as Fishery Management Plans. We have reviewed the January 20, 1999, North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Environmental Assessment to locate EFH area as identified by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

We have determined that the described activity may adversely affect EFH. The proposed work may affect approximately 2,200 acres of EFH for ground fish, and crab. This Public Notice initiates consultation requirements with NMFS under the MSFCMA. We have insufficient information at this time to assess the cumulative effects of the proposed work on EFH, but cumulative effects will be considered in our final assessment of the described work. Any conservation recommendations regarding EFH for federally managed fish will also be considered in our final assessment of the described work. This proposed project may also adversely affect associated species such as major prey or predator species which are not covered by Fishery Management Plans.

SPECIAL AREA DESIGNATION: Marine waters off shore of Nome.

EVALUATION: The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity and its intended use on the public interest. Evaluation of the probable impacts, which the proposed activity may have on the public interest, requires a careful weighing of all the factors that become relevant in each particular case. The benefits, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. The decision whether to authorize a proposal, and if so, the conditions under which it will be allowed to occur, are therefore determined by the outcome of the general balancing process. That decision should reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. All factors, which may be relevant to the proposal, must be considered including the cumulative effects thereof. Among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shore erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. For activities involving 404 discharges, a permit will be denied if the discharge that would be authorized by such permit would not comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's 404(b)(1) guidelines. Subject to the preceding sentence and any other applicable guidelines or criteria (see Sections 320.2 and 320.3), a permit will be granted unless the District Engineer determines that it would be contrary to the public interest.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

Comments on the described work, with the reference number, should reach this office no later than the expiration date of this Public Notice to become part of the record and be considered in the decision. Please contact Mr. Victor Ross at (907) 753-2716, toll free from within Alaska at (800) 478-2712, or by email at victor.o.ross@poa02.usace.army.mil, if further information is desired concerning this notice.

AUTHORITY: This permit will be issued or denied under the following authorities:

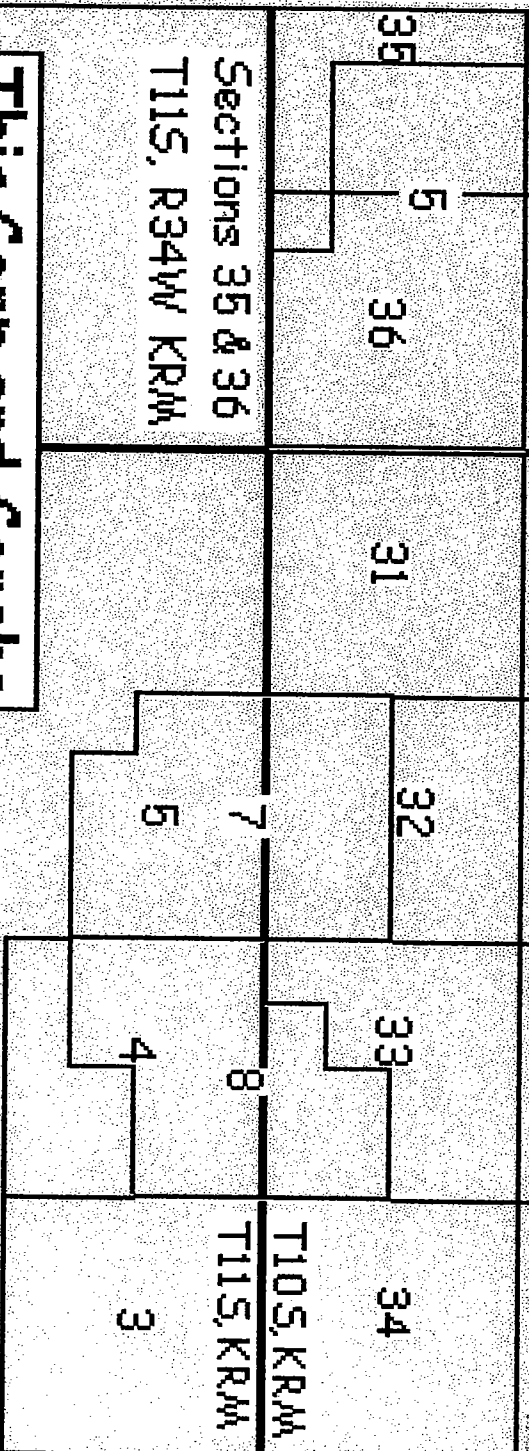
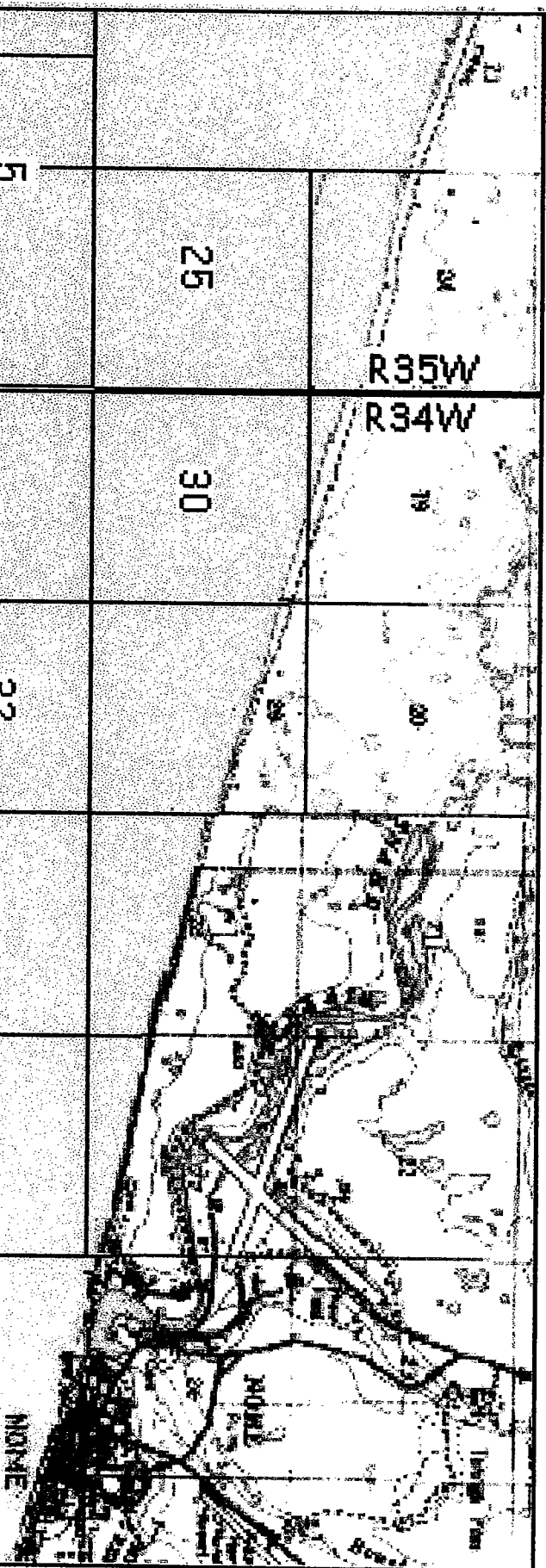
(X) Perform work in or affecting navigable waters of the United States -
Section 10 Rivers and Harbors Act 1899 (33 U.S.C. 403).

(X) Discharge dredged or fill material into waters of the United States -
Section 404 Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344). Therefore, our public interest
review will consider the guidelines set forth under Section 404(b) of the Clean
Water Act (40 CFR 230).

A plan, Notice of Application for Certification of Consistency with the Alaska
Coastal Management Program, and Notice of Application for State Water Quality
Certification are attached to this Public Notice.

District Engineer
U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers

Attachments



**This Corp. and Concho
Holding's Co. Lease
Blocks 5, 7, 8
(in red outlines too)**

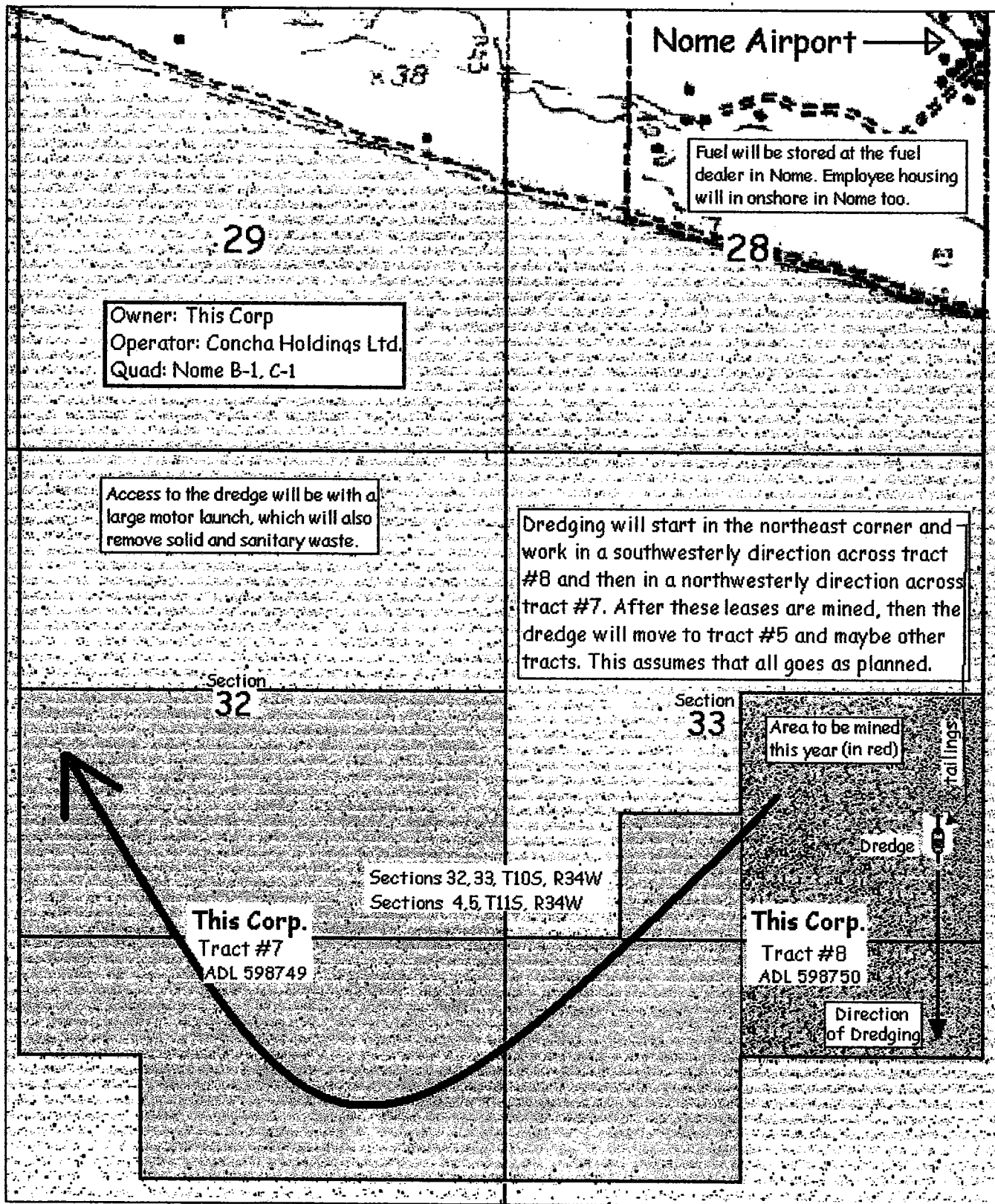
Sections 32, 33, T10S, R34W
Sections 4, 5, T11S, R34W

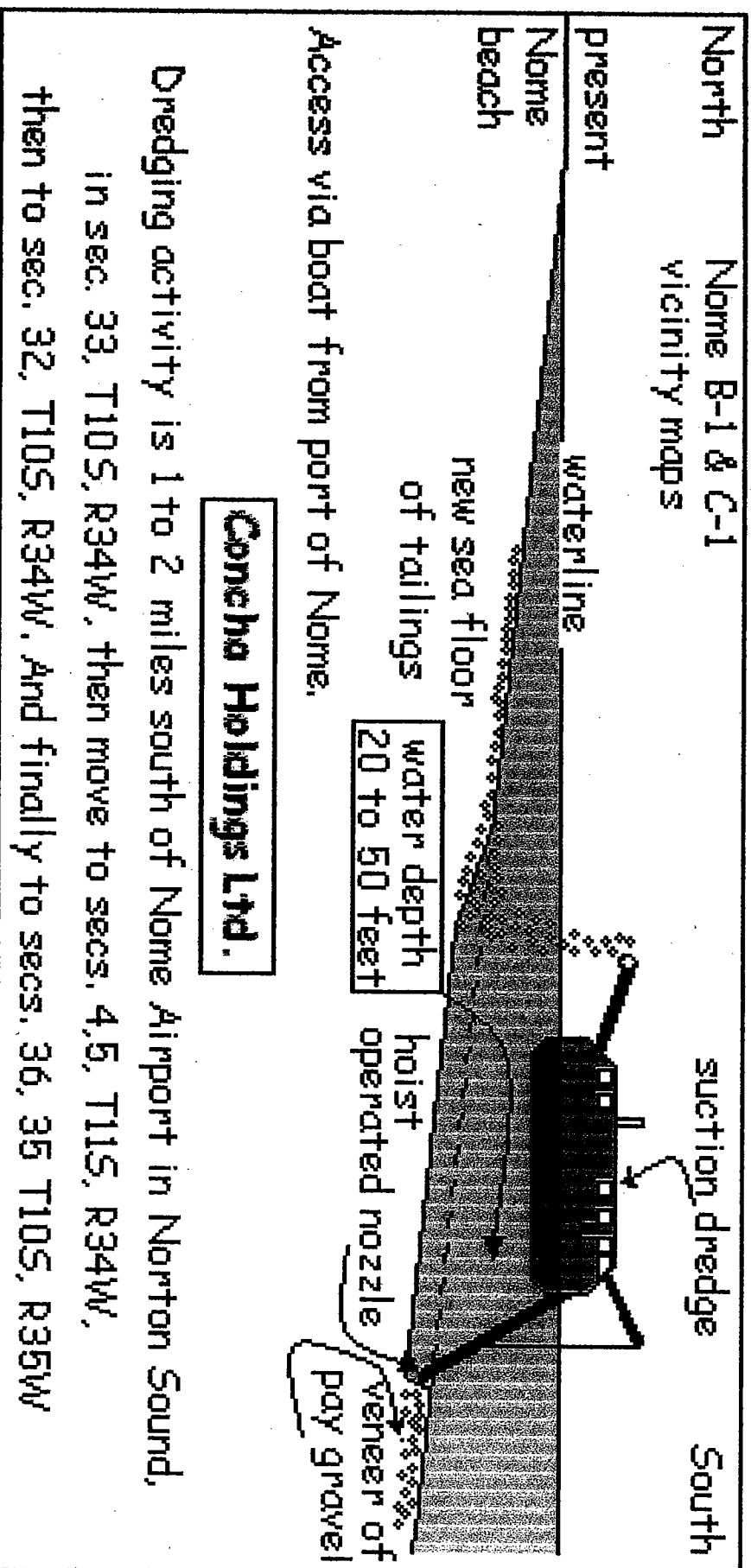
Nome B-1, C-1
Quad Maps

Concha Holdings Ltd.
POA-2004-282-2
Norton Sound
Sheet 1 of 2

Vicinity Map

*Attachment 1
as shown on 15*





STATE OF ALASKA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

DIVISION OF AIR AND WATER QUALITY

Non-Point Source Control Section

401 Certification Program

**NOTICE OF APPLICATION
FOR
STATE WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION**

Any applicant for a federal license or permit to conduct an activity that might result in a discharge into navigable waters, in accordance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (PL95-217), also must apply for and obtain certification from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation that the discharge will comply with the Clean Water Act, the Alaska Water Quality Standards, and other applicable State laws. By agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Environmental Conservation, application for a Department of the Army permit to discharge dredged or fill material into navigable waters under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act also may serve as application for State Water Quality Certification.

Notice is hereby given that the application for a Department of the Army Permit described in the Corps of Engineers' Public Notice No. POA 2004-282-2, Norton Sound, serves as application for State Water Quality Certification from the Department of Environmental Conservation.

After reviewing the application, the Department may certify that there is reasonable assurance that the activity, and any discharge that might result, will comply with the Clean Water Act, the Alaska Water Quality Standards, and other applicable State laws. The Department also may deny or waive certification.

Any person desiring to comment on the project with respect to Water Quality Certification may submit written comments within 30 days of the date of the Corps of Engineer's Public Notice to:

Department of Environmental Conservation
WQM/401 Certification
555 Cordova Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2617
Telephone: (907) 269-7564
FAX: (907) 269-7508

STATE OF ALASKA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
DIVISION OF GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

SOUTHCENTRAL REGIONAL OFFICE
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1660
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501-3568
PHONE: (907) 269-7470/FAX: (907) 269-3981

NOTICE OF APPLICATION
FOR
CERTIFICATION OF CONSISTENCY WITH THE
ALASKA COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Notice is hereby given that a request is being filed with the Division of Governmental Coordination for a consistency determination, as provided in Section 307(c)(3) of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended [16 U.S.C. 1456(c)(3)], that the project described in the Corps of Engineers Public Notice No. POA 2004-282-2, Norton Sound, will comply with the Alaska Coastal Management Program and that the project will be conducted in a manner consistent with that program.

The Division of Governmental Coordination requests your comments, particularly on the proposed project's consistency with the affected local coastal district management program. For more information on the consistency review process, comment deadlines, and the affected coastal district status, or to submit written comments, please contact the Division of Governmental Coordination at 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1660, Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3568, (907) 269-7470.

Attachment 3